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GPW Report No. 35 -- USSR

(June 2, 1952)

SUMMARY

The Georgian SSR Komsomol Congress is told that the Republic's youths are still backward and tainted with religious belief and prejudices. The Russification of the young people, it is intimated, is proceeding far too slowly. Other items on Party activities continue to harp on the evil of suppressing criticism "from below" (snizu) and the general avoidance of highly controversial issues. Criticized also is the failure to teach and study Marxism-Leninism as it should be, that is, as the determining factor of all Soviet economic activities.

In agriculture, the spring sowing and plowing campaign still claims much of the regional radio and press attention. There is implicit and explicit admission of great sugar-beet losses in the Ukraine and elsewhere occasioned by the beet weevil (burakovy dolgonosik). Past negligence in the maintenance of technical equipment is said to be making itself felt now, at the height of spring field work. An increase in the frequency of agricultural statute violations is reported from several sources.

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Georgian Komsomol Among Most Backward: By far the most revealing broadcast on Party life and activities is Party Secretary Mgeladze's speech before the 19th Komsomol Congress of Georgian SSR (May 17). His sharp criticism of the Georgian Party itself last April, as discussed in a previous CPW report, was mild by comparison. Indeed it appears, according to the Secretary, that the Georgian Komsomol has outdone its Party mentors in committing corrupt and other un-Bolshevik activities. Stalin himself is said to have looked into the Georgian Party activities and found "deficiencies in them...which threatened to have serious consequences." The list of Komsomol shortcomings, as recited by Mgeladze, include practically every sin in the Communist bible, from immoral acts to church weddings and insufficient interest in mountain climbing.

The Georgian Komsomol is said to have deteriorated to such an extent that radical measures to improve its organizational and internal work are now in order: Such steps, however, are not to the liking of many Georgian Komsomol leaders who "it must be said outright...are losing their taste for this aspect of the work, or else they never had any taste for it." The danger inherent in such lack of vigilance and political blindness, as Mgeladze puts it, has already made itself felt, as many unscrupulous people managed to maneuver themselves into positions of confidence and "filtered into positions of authority." The Secretary does not name any of the untrustworthy Komsomol officials but it may be inferred from his repeated references to their various fields of activities that they are too numerous to be listed.

The apathetic attitude of the Komsomol rank-and-file members toward their "honorable duties" in general is seen in Mgeladze's assertion that in most of the organizations, particularly in the primary ones, "it is considered a great achievement when a quorum is assembled" for a general meeting. Although the oft-criticized Party practice of frequently and unnecessarily reshuffling Communist personnel does not apply to the Georgian Komsomol, the latter is said to be no less errant in its tendencies to the other extreme, that it keeping officials at the same post too long:

There is no need for officially establishing how long this or that worker must be secretary of rayon, town or oblast Komsomol Committee, or the Central Committee of the Komsomol, but people should not be kept on the same jobs too long. This leads to some of them getting used to shortcomings in work, creates an atmosphere of familiarity of which they sometimes are not conscious.

Russian version:

Ne sleduyet offitsialno ustanavlivat skolko let tot ili inoy rabochiy dolzhen byt sekretarem raykoma, gorkoma ili tseka komsomola. No vse zhe tak dolgo derzhat ludey na odnoy i toy zhe rabote no sleduyet. Eto sposobstvuyet tomu, chto nekotorie iz nikh privykayut k nedostatkam v rabote, sozdayut obstanovku panibratstva, prichem inoy raz sami etogo ne zamechayut.

It is revealed, in this connection, that many Komsomol officials, from the Central Committee down, have been entrenched in their leading posts for "8, 10, and even 16 years" thereby preventing the promotion of "deserving" young Communists to posts of leadership.

The lack of proper political education within the Komsomol school network is referred to as disgraceful. Only 98,000 out of the 350,000 Georgian Komsomols are said to be attending school, and the quality of instruction is so poor that "there can be no justification" for it. Pointing to the unqualified instructor-propagandists as the source of widespread ignorance among the young Communists, Mgeladze quotes two so-called political educators to prove his point. The instructor of a political study group in Mayakovsky Rayon told his students in the course of a lecture that

At the time of foreign intervention and Civil War in Russia, the Emperor of Germany, Wilhelm the Second, ordered the Polish troops under the command of Gen. Wrangel to invade the Soviet Ukraine.

Another lecturer, a deputy Komsomol Committee secretary in Tbilisi, declared in a talk to her Party audience that "the Vatican is a Korean Minister." Such examples of political ignorance, says the Secretary, are "impossible to surpass," and they are doing more harm than good to the Party.

Among the other objectionable features characterizing many Georgian Komsomols are "amorality..various crimes, drunkenness, hooliganism." Mgeladze identifies amorality with the "survival of capitalism" in the consciousness of the young Communists. Church weddings, another sign of political "demoralization", are said to be rather frequent among Komsomols, even among officials on the secretary level. Religious belief, in fact, is said to be assuming preposterous proportions. A girl Komsomol is quoted as having declared that

"God willed that I am to have an operation of the appendix. The Lord be praised!" But whom should this God's patient praise for having been elected secretary of the Komsomol organization?

Russian version:

"Bog velel mne sozdat operatsiu slepoy kishki. Khvala emu!" No komy zhe eta patsientka boga dolzhna vozdat khvalu za to, chto ona okazalas izbrannoy sekretarem komsomolskoy organizatsii?

Mgeladze is particularly sarcastic about the performance of the school Komsomol organizations whose duty it is to encourage better studies and keep the children's morale high. How much those school children are influenced by their Communist mentors is seen from his reference to the actual situation:

Superstition and religious prejudices are rife among some school children. For example, in some school in Tbilisi a chain letter is being circulated purporting to bring luck to those who make nine copies of it and send them out. ...Others to go church and pray to God for help in their studies. It must be assumed that those students who waste their time going to church get non-passing marks in class and stay for the second year, with God's help!

Russian version:

Sredi chastei shkolnikov rasprostraneni suyeverie, religioznie predrasudki. Izvestno, naprimer, chto v shkolakh Tbilisi khodit po rukam tak-nazyvayemoye (yetoye) pismo, prinosiashcheye yakoby schastye tem, kto ego perepishet devyat raz i rozdaet vo vse storony. ...drugie idut v tserkov i molyat boga o pomoshchi v svoikh uchenicheskikh delakh. Nado polagat, chto eto kak raz te ucheniki i uchenitsy kotorye tratyat vremia vmesto ucheby na khozhdenie v tserkov, poluchayut dvoiki i ostayutsya, s bozhyey pomoshchyu, na vtoroy god.

The Russification of the Georgian youth, although not referred to by that term, is said to be progressing much too slowly, and drastic measures are urged to improve the situation. The importance of the Russian language is apparently not realized by the appropriate Party and Komsomol organizations. That is said to be evident from the selection of Russian instructors many of whom are not even conversant with the language as they should be:

It is necessary to know the Russian language as well as one's mother tongue... It is high time for us to take the matter of Russian instruction in hand and thereby insure fluency in the spoken and written tongue upon graduation from secondary schools.

Russian version:

Russkiy yazyk sleduyet znat tak zhe khorosho, kak i svooy rodnoy yazyk... Davno uzh pora krepko vzyatsya za delo prepodavaniya russkogo yazayka i dobitya, chtoby po okonchaniu kursa sredney shkoly uchashchiysya mog svobodno govorit, chitat i pisat po-russki.

(Of some significance, in this connection, is the fact that the principal speech at this Komsomol Congress was made in Russian rather than in Georgian.)

Physical training and heavy and light athletics have been grossly neglected in Georgia, according to the Secretary, and in a number of rayons discontinued altogether. The large figures of physical trainees referred to by Communist officials are "taken from thin air...and exist only on paper." Actually, in such rayons as Kachretskiy, Zugdidi, Chkhorotuskuskiy, Abashskiy, Tsalandzhinskiy, Akhmetskiy, Tskhakayevskiy, and others there are "hardly any" sports activities at all. Although Georgia is famous for its great alpinists, the situation in mountain-climbing competitions (Alpiniady) to have deteriorated as a mass sports activity. In Tsvibuli, for example, the only sports premises have been converted into a wine cellar: "Is it not a disgrace (bezobrazie)!"

Violation of labor discipline, absenteeism (proguly) and a careless attitude toward machinery and other equipment are declared to be frequent among Komsomol workers who account for 50 to 60 percent of the industrial engineering and labor force. Such Komsomol behavior is all the more nefarious in view of its duties as a junior partner of the Party to combat all sorts of infringements of the Socialist labor law:

Georgian Komsomol organizations must give effective help to the Party organizations in eliminating the lag in industry, agriculture, transport, and trade, and in the fight against such crimes as bribery, embezzlement of State funds, misappropriation of Socialist property, speculation and speculation.

Russian version:

Komsomolskie organizatsii Gruzii dolzhny okazat deystvennuyu pomoshch partiyным organizatsiam v likvidatsii otstavaniya v oblasti promyshlennosti, selskogo khozaystva, transporta, trgovli i v borbe s takimi prestupleniyami, kak vzyatochnichestvo, kaznokradstvo khishchenie sotsialisticheskoy sobstvennosti, rastrata i spekulyatsia.

PARTY ACTIVITIES

Fairly heavy publicity is given to the 30th anniversary of the Soviet Pioneers Organization (May 19). Here, too, the occasion is used to point out the familiar shortcoming in the youngsters' activities under the overall supervision of the Komsomol. Most of the regional comment, however, is favorable and the topic is treated along conventional lines. STALINGRADSKAYA PRAVDA (May 18), reiterating that the most important duty of a Pioneer is to "study well and maintain strict school discipline," admits that this is not evident in the oblast organizations. The Komsomol Committees, it is claimed, have relaxed their supervision over the Pioneers' activities to such an extent that the situation has become "absolutely intolerable." The academic progress of the children has been slow, Pioneer meetings are seldom held, and the school teachers do not get much assistance from the future Communists.

Most of the other broadcasts on Party Life are diffuse in character and cover the usual wide range of topics. Inadequate attention to political education on the part of Komsomols and non-partisan youth continues to be the object of official criticism. A Kinzhebayev article carried by LENINSKAYA SMENA (May 8) pleads for the immediate elimination of the grave shortcomings in Kazakhstan's political schools. The Komsomol Committees, it is claimed, behave as if they have lost all interest in the propagandists and political advisers whose qualifications have dropped below the required standard. The quality of political studies has deteriorated, and the whole educational setup is now characterized by a low ideological and theoretical level. STALINGRADSKAYA PRAVDA (May 15) asserts that the shortage of teachers, particularly qualified Russian-language teachers, is too serious to be left unattended. The training of teachers' cadres is said to be so poor that many of the graduating instructors are not up to their job of conducting classes. The paper urges that more Kazakh women be trained for teaching jobs in order to relieve the present shortage.

The Party, says ZARYA VOSTOKA (May 13), has entrusted its helper, the Komsomol with the task of educating the Soviet youth but this does not lessen its responsibility for the education of the Komsomols themselves. It is in fact revealed that the Party organizations "often forget" (chasto zabyvayut) that the education of young Communists is important, and do not "regard it their duty" to supervise their educational activities. All the tried ways and means of propaganda and mass political work must be employed, says the paper, to educate the Komsomols "in the spirit of aggressive political vigilance" (v dukhe nastoychivoy politicheskoy bditelnosti). A larger dose of Marxism-Leninism for krai college students is suggested by STAVROPOLSKAYA PRAVDA (May 13). Moreover, the paper demands that "science" should not be taught as an abstraction but as an integral part of "the most important tasks of Communist construction." The paper complains that many lectures at the higher educational institutions do not show "Leninism in action" and fail to stress the "creative character" of the Marxist-Leninist theory. Such shortcomings are said to apply to the colleges of Stavropol and Pyatigorsk where college instruction and political seminars are carried out in a "formal manner" and the most important aspects of the Marxist-Leninist theory "do not receive the necessary elucidation" (ne poluchayut neobkhodimogo razyasnenia).

Intra-Party democracy is in jeopardy, according to ZARYA VOSTOKA (May 8) as long as "nearsighted and clumsy" people who put their personal interests above those of the State and Party are placed in leading positions. It is suggested that the distribution and placements of leading cadres in the Republic be looked into since the tendency of many present officials to "let things drift" is inimicable to the interests of the State. What is needed, says the paper, is a corps of young vigorous officials determined to "get things done." There is no specific reference to names and places, but the tenor of the editorial suggests that the object of the paper's attention is the Georgian Republic as a whole.

Soviet "solicitude" for the equal status of the women among the Asiatic nationals is emphasized in a KOMSOMOLSKAYA PRAVDA article by the Central Committee Secretary of Kazakhstan's Komsomol (May 13). Planned and forced marriage, says she, are vigorously opposed by the Soviet government, and the organizers of such marriages are dealt with by the State prosecutors. The case is cited of a collective farmer who "decided" to marry a 16-year old school girl. The marriage would have been consummated regardless of the girl's wishes had not the school Komsomol organization learned about it and come to the student's rescue. The frustrated farmer is quoted as saying that the Soviet school is too strong to be challenged--due to the ideas of the Bolshevik Party. This incident, the article concludes, is characteristic of the "burning intolerance" of the Kazakh Komsomols of any attempt to restore the morals of old.

The continued disregard of "criticism from below" (kritika snizu) is again the object of PRAVDA's editorial criticism (May 13). This paper, it will be recalled, initiated the campaign for more criticism from below and more attention to it from above some time ago, and has since dealt with the subject at frequent intervals. This time it is the so-called polished Communists (lakirovannii kommunisty) who are said to stand in the way of honest criticism from the ranks. In Bashkirian ASSR, for example, criticism is not only disregarded but the critics frequently lose their jobs and are even persecuted. Danger signals, as the paper puts it, are heard also from Penza Oblast, Baku City, and other places where criticism of Party officials may involve certain risks. The local press is called upon to come to the aid of the good Party men by giving them more space for criticism and by looking into their complaints in a "more serious and profound manner." A number of regional newspapers are said to be reluctant to deal with too much criticism, and as a rule confine themselves to "skimming the surface" (skolzit' po poverkhnosti) of controversial discussions.

AGRICULTURE

Official attention is still concentrated on the current sowing campaign, and, wherever the spring sowing has already been completed, the stress is on proper crop maintenance. A collective letter to Stalin from agricultural workers of the Kirghizian SSR makes passing reference to the Republic's indebtedness to the State, that is, plan failure in regard to the production of cotton, sugar cane, wool, and milk. Admissions of various agricultural failings are heard from a number of regional sources, most of them in context of the current sowing and crop maintenance campaign.

A progress report on the oblast field work issued by the Stalingrad Agricultural Administration (May 7) intimates that the collective farm performance so far shows anything but progress. The following rayons are reported to have failed to sow wheat, mustard, and sunflower "on thousands of hectares:" Metkachevskiy, Zhdanovskiy, Kletskiy, Frolovskiy, Kalachevskiy, Uryupinskiy, Budarinskiy, Macheshanskiy, Rudnyanskiy, Logovskiy, Kaganovicheskiy, Voroshilovskiy, Balykleyevskiy, and others. At least five other rayons managed to sow "insignificant areas" as compared with the acreage specified in the plan, while the sowing of fodder crops, perennial grasses, beets, and others is said to be "most unsatisfactory" in most of the oblast rayons. The same applies also to vegetables and melons, according to the report.

KAZAKHSTANSKAYA PRAVDA (May 8) is critical of the "impermissibly slow sowing tempo" in North Kazakhstan, Pavlodar and East Kazakhstan oblasts and delays in the sowing campaign in Aktyubinsk Oblast. Such an intolerable attitude toward spring field work, says the paper, if continued, will lead to a total crop failure. Many machine units are said to be working only one shift per day, and the situation is still further aggravated by the lack of trailing equipment and the large-scale idleness of tractors due to the faulty distribution of fuel supplies and seeds. Most of the agricultural shortcomings in North Kazakhstan and Kustanai oblasts are said to stem from the inadequate handling and maintenance of machinery. KURSKAYA PRAVDA (May 8) bemoans the "extremely valuable" time that is allowed to pass without any concrete agricultural achievements. The source of trouble is traced to the inefficiency of the machine-tractor stations and their reluctance to "adopt progressive methods" of work. This point, however, is not amplified.

PRAVDA (May 12) reviews the current agricultural situation and finds that a number of oblasts and larger geographical areas are still lagging behind the expected performance and need more prodding. Idleness of tractors, says the paper, is only one of the contributing factors. What is far worse is the collusion between machine-tractor stations and collective farms to cheat the State: "Frequently machine-tractor stations and kolkhozes do not observe their contractual obligations and conceal each other's poor quality work" (Neredko mashino-traktornie stantsii i kolkhozy ne soblyudayut dogovornikh obyazatelstv, dopuskayut vzaimnoye ukryvatelstvo nedobrokachestvennoy raboty). Kaluga Oblast "has not developed the necessary tempos" (ne nabrala nuzhnykh tempov) and is far behind its neighboring oblasts and the plan. The agricultural performance of Kursk and Orel oblasts is not much better. The poor repair job done on the farm machinery in those places is not making itself felt; tractors are either idle or laid up for additional repairs at the height of the agricultural season. The spring sowing in the central black-soil areas (tsentralno-chernozemnye rayony), the Volga area, Siberia and Kazakhstan also calls for a "radical improvement" (rezkoye uluchshenie), according to the editorial. The only way to achieve that, it is suggested, institute a two-shift day and to check the daily performance of every individual machine and tractor driver.

In areas where the spring sowing has already been completed the propaganda pressure is now applied to proper crop maintenance which, like many other aspects of agriculture, is said to be inconsistent and lacking uniformity in many oblasts. STAVROPOLSKAYA PRAVDA (May 8), for example, reveals that weeding has been neglected in many of the rayons: "It must be admitted that the kolkhoz and agricultural organizations are not paying sufficient attention to this most important condition for a good harvest." The inadequate fight against agricultural pests, particularly the sugar-beet weevil (dolgonozik), is said to have caused great beet losses, according to several regional transmitters: A broadcast from Sumy (May 11) recalls the Ukrainian Communist Party strictures about the widespread irresponsible attitude toward the fight against the weevil and discloses that "great losses of sugar beets" have already been noted in Kiev, Poltava, Vinnitsa, and Kirovograd oblasts. On May 13, RADYANSKA UKRAINIA refers to its previous issue devoted to agricultural pest extermination, and adds that the criminal neglect shown in this connection "is the sole cause of the partial and complete destruction of sugar-beet plantations." It is also revealed, incidentally, that a number of agricultural leaders, having failed to save the beet crop from destruction, "hide the fact and do not resow the plantations." The main editorial criticism, however, is directed against the "numerous instances of failure" to exterminate the weevil and take proper care of the crops in general: "good sowing is not all there is to be done, it is only the beginning of the struggle..."

Violations of "agricultural principles" in Kirovograd Oblast have become so widespread, that according to a broadcast of May 16, the Oblast Party Committee instructed the chief prosecutor to investigate every case and "to bring the guilty parties to criminal judicial responsibility." The decision taken in this connection by the Party notes that some Party and agricultural officials "deserve being expelled from the Communist Party" for submitting fictitious documents designed to cover their failure to combat the sugar-beet weevil. Other officials are said to "deserve being handed over to the judiciary for criminal action" but in consideration of their recantation and promises to do better in the future the Party "is satisfied with giving them a severe admonition" with an appropriate notation on their individual cards. The mentioned Party decision goes on to warn all rayon Party secretaries, Executive Committee chairman, machine-tractor station directors and other agricultural officials that crop maintenance and pest extermination are priority targets and continued infringements of agrotechnical rules will involve severe penalties. KURSKAYA PRAVDA observes (May 18) that a number of the oblast's agricultural organizations "are repeating the mistakes of last year" in connection with tending sown areas. Mass weeding in the fields has not been organized, plowing teams have not been selected, and, what is worse, no pest-prevention measures have yet been taken.

Agricultural statute violations, unreported for some time, are again referred to in a number of broadcasts. ZARYA VOSTOKA (May 10) has reference to Georgian SSR as a whole when it declares that

...despite the serious warning of the Party and the State concerning the need to eradicate violations of agricultural artel statutes...control over the strict observance of the statute has become more lax.

Denouncing the evil practice of "showing a conciliatory attitude" toward statute violators, the editorial insists that such individuals and their abettors should be made to "bear the full weight of Soviet law" (nesti na sebe vsyu tyazhest sovetskogo zakona). One method of combating or even preventing agricultural statute violations, according to the paper, is the "training and retraining" of collective farm accountants and bookkeepers.

ZVYAZDA (May 15) takes issue with the Byelorussian Ministry of Agriculture and certain unnamed Party officials for their "incorrect attitude" towards workers' letter. Many agricultural workers, says the paper, are complaining to the Ministry and individual officials about instances of agricultural statute violations, but their warnings are left unheeded. The editorial mentions the May First Collective Farm as a case in point. The chairman of that farm has been "disposing of communal property according to his own ideas, sometimes for the benefit of individuals and greedy elements." The local Party Committee, however, never reacted to the workers letters reporting the mentioned violations.

Defining the illegal disposition of kolkhoz property as the "gravest violation of the agricultural statute", MOLOT admits editorially (May 16) that "examples of criminal pilferage and squandering" of kolkhoz property are still noted in some rayons of the oblast. Neklinovskiy, Kagalnitskiy, Orlovskiy, and other rayons are referred to as the worst of the lot. Implicit reference to the gravity of the situation is contained in the paper's assertion that some of the officials charged with the enforcement of the agricultural charter were themselves found violating it:

...Party and Soviet organs of some rayons are not only not undertaking determined measures to stop such criminal acts, but are also frequently defending the malicious violators...protecting them from responsibility and punishment.

MISCELLANEOUS

Russian Language "Verboten": In a talk to the home audience on May 13, Sychev refers to the loyalty checks in U.S. as a "fixed-idea cult" (kult navyazchivyykh idey). The suppression of progressive ideas is said to have reached such monstrous proportions that any manifestation of independent thinking may bring reprisals. Thus a State Department employee was dismissed from his job because "he knew a professor who knew someone who read progressive literature". Another government employee "is being persecuted just because he studied the Russian language" (podvergnut goneniu potomu tolko, chto on izuchayet russkiy yazyk).

Religion in the News: A broadcast from Baku to the Near and Middle East quotes an appeal by the Moslem head of European Russia and Siberia to the "honorable Moslems of the globe." Quoting the Koran on living in peace, the Mufti calls upon the "seekers after peace" to obey the will of the Almighty and fight against the aggressive schemes of the American kindlers of a new world war. (May 17)

A TASS transmission to Europe (May 18) quotes Prof. Katayev as declaring that the high vacuum kinescope and iconoscope were originated in the USSR. Even color television, according to the professor, is closely associated with Soviet research, and is no longer a scientific problem since the idea of obtaining any color by various combinations of the elementary blue, yellow, and red was "clearly expressed by the great Russian scientist Lomonosov."

